DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 069 575 SO 004 956

AUTHOR Whyte, William
TITLE Markles Flats Junior High School: A Project of the Ithaca School System and the Human Affairs Program of Cornell University.
INSTITUTION Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N. Y. Human Affairs Program.; Ithaca Public Schools, N. Y.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Schools; Community Schools; Educational Philosophy; *Experimental Schools; Field Experience Programs; Humanization; *Human Relations Programs; *Junior High Schools; Program Descriptions; Projects; Public School Systems; *School Community Relationship; School Environment; School Organization; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Markles Flats Junior High School

ABSTRACT

The rationale, objectives, descriptions, evaluations, and plans for an alternative junior high school, Markles Flats which is a joint collaboration of the Ithaca public system and the Human Affairs Program of Cornell University, are described in this paper. As part of a broader effort to develop a different educational environment for a group of students, and for the higher education institutions in Ithaca to contribute skills and resources to the community, the school aims to foster the individual development of its 85 pupils, each in relation to his fellow beings, namely, a school whose classroom is the community and the world. During the first year Markles Flats was in operation a strong leadership was lacking, some students were drifting and unruly, and community interaction was somewhat neglected. Although pupils progressed academically at the same rate as students in other Ithaca junior high schools, on the positive side, the Markles Flats students evaluated their school higher, and a parents' organization was started. Planning for the second year worked to eliminate problems of the first year, implementing a more structured system with strong leadership. Appendices include sections on student goals, evaluation, student body, selection of teaching assistants, and plans for the continuation of Markles Flats School. (SJM)

ED 069575

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MARKLES FLATS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A Project of the Ithaca School System and the Human Affairs Program of Cornell University

William F. Whyte

SP004956

The Human Affairs Program, launched in the fall of 1969, has as one of its principal purposes the aim of providing undergraduate students with field work experience on the problems of communities and organizations in the region surrounding Cornell. The Markles Flats project grew out of a Human Affairs Program seminar on innovative education, during the spring semester of 1970.

Ben Nichols, HAP Director, and Frederick Stutz, Professor of Education (and member of the HAP Administrative Board) had had years of experience with less ambitious projects within the Ithaca School System. Their conversations with Superintendent Roger Bardwell indicated that there was a possibility of developing an alternate junior high school within the Ithaca School System, in collaboration with Cornell. The possibility of moving from readings and discussions on what's-wrong-with-education to the building of a new experimental program captured the imaginations of the seminar participants, and they went to work with energy and dedication to bring the project into being. Through visits to the Ithaca schools and discussions with professional teachers in the system, the Cornell students recruited three of these teachers to work with them on the planning project. At the end of a long period of planning, discussion with school administrators and School Board members, in late May of 1970 the School Board voted to launch the project in September of that year. Planning activities continued on a highly intensive basis through a five-week summer workshop in which the Cornell teaching assistants worked closely with the professional teachers.

Markles Flats, during the first year of its existence, was characterized by the following features:

1. Aims. The project proposed to explore alternatives to the traditional school program. The planners aimed to develop an open classroom, to build learning out of projects requiring the integration of various types of knowledge and skills rather than through standard courses. The pupils themselves were to be encouraged to develop a high degree of initiative in planning and carrying out their educational program. The school was to operate in a participative manner, with professional teachers, teaching assistants, and representatives of pupils themselves being involved in developing the organization and its rules and procedures. The plan also called for an emphasis on pupil learning through projects that developed in community facilities outside of the school.

2. Separate location. So as to provide for maximum autonomy and flexibility of program, Markles Flats was housed in an old downtown building owned by the School Board, rather than being placed within one of the two large junior high schools.

3. Pupils. Eighty-five pupils were recruited and selected on a voluntary application basis, with the expression of interest by both parents and child being re-

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

quired for inclusion of the pupil into the program. The aim at first was to concentrate on 7th and 8th grades, but several 9th graders were included during the course of the year. The aim further was to have a heterogeneous pupil population, both in terms of social class and of past academic performance. The planners thought that the school should be particularly valuable to pupils of above-average ability who found themselves bored and unchallenged in more traditional settings, and also to pupils who, whatever their potential, had had difficulties in adapting to standard school programs. The school proved particularly attractive to parents of Cornell-related families, and children from these families made up approximately 40% of the student body. While children from families of other social class backgrounds were not represented fully in proportion to their members in the general population, the school nevertheless did enroll a significant number of children from working class families. In spite of special efforts to attract children from the black community, only three enrolled.

4. Organization. One of the three professional teachers was designated as head teacher, with administrative responsibility for the school to the Superintendent and the School Board. Fourteen Cornell teaching assistants worked full time in the school. The Human Affairs Program appointed a Cornell coordinator to work particularly with the Cornell students within the school setting.

5. Financing. It was agreed between the Superintendent and the Human Affairs Program that Markles Flats was not to cost the taxpayer any more than the average per-pupil cost of the other two junior high schools. (In fact, the Superintendent's analysis of the first year's experience indicated that Markles Flats cost the taxpayers substantially less than the average per-pupil cost of the other two junior high schools.) The teaching assistants served without financial compensation either by the school district or by Cornell University. The salary of the HAP coordinator was paid from a grant secured from the Center for Research on Education at Cornell University.

6. Cornell academic credit. In effect, the teaching assistants were paid in the form of full time academic credit at Cornell University. They received 9 hours credit for teaching in Markles Flats, 3 for a seminar on junior high school education taught by the Cornell Coordinator, and an additional 3 or 4 hours for an individual (Markles-related) study project with a professor.

The First Year of Markles Flats

There was widespread public debate, both in the spring of 1970 when Markles Flats was being established, and again in the late spring of 1971, when the future of the school hung in the balance. The School Board itself was sharply divided on this issue. Opponents of the school attacked its apparent disorderly nature and the lack of "firm discipline." There were charges that the Human Affairs Program was using Markles Flats as a base for "infiltrating" the schools and "radicalizing" the school children.

The strongest support came from Markles Flats' parents, a number of whom claimed that the school had been of enormous educational and social benefit to their children.

Among parents organization, school system administrators, and Cornell professors closest to Markles Flats, there was a general consensus regarding some of the deficiencies in the program. The following points briefly summarize the diagnosis:

1. Organization and leadership. The school was plagued by a dual leadership problem. It had been assumed that the head teacher and the Cornell coordinator would work closely together, and this relationship had seemed to exist in the planning stages, but it broke down under the stresses of school operation. The sequence of activities in the development of the project also led to some confusion in the relations between the professional teachers and the teaching assistants. The Cornell TAs lacked teaching experience, and yet it was they who had taken the lead in developing the project and had coopted the professional teachers midway in the process. This experience supported an anti-authoritarian norm and promoted the ideal of more or less equal sharing in decision-making. As time went on, the TAs and the professional teachers became increasingly convinced of the need for "strong leadership," and yet there was no one generally acceptable to the participants in such a leadership role. Especially during the first semester, this situation led to endless staff discussion meetings, through which the participants attempted to shape and reshape the administrative structure and procedures.

2. Drifting versus learning. The school was apparently highly successful for a number of pupils who displayed a good deal of initiative in shaping their own educational programs. Toward the end of the school year, there were indications that several of the pupils who had been completely off the educational track were beginning to find themselves and to progress both in learning and in self-confidence. Between these two extremes, there appeared to be a number of children who were smart enough to "get by" with minimum performance and who never became fully engaged in the Markles Flats educational process.

3. Disciplinary problems. Perhaps the project asked for trouble in welcoming in a number of pupils who had been severe disciplinary problems in their previous school experience. It does not take many unruly and rebellious children to disrupt the learning situation for the school as a whole. The TAs and teachers found themselves spending innordinate amounts of time trying to work with a few disruptive pupils. While performance improved toward the end of the school year, some serious problems remained.

4. Community relations. The staff was too concerned with the school's internal organizational problems to reach out effectively into the community. Only a few promising beginnings were made in this area of utilizing community resources. Furthermore, the school came to be defined as a problem among a number of adult residents of its low income neighborhood, who were upset with the freedom of movement of the pupils beyond the school walls and by evidences of lack of "proper respect" for adults and for school property. (In fact, the other junior high schools experienced more serious cases of vandalism during the same period, but these incidents tended to be attributed to a pervasive moral deterioration in our society rather than to the effects of a new style of educational program, as was the case with Markles Flats.)

The school was also subjected to research assessment of its effectiveness by Professor of Education Robert Bruce, who was retained by the school district for this purpose, and by Professor of Sociology, Robert R. McGinnis, who was also a Markles Flats parent. Both studies involved an analysis of educational test scores at the beginning and end of the year for Markles Flats and for an opinion survey of Markles Flats pupils, in comparison with a sample of pupils in the other two junior high schools. Both studies reached the same conclusion: on the educational tests from beginning to end of the year, Markles Flats pupils progressed no better than the average of the other junior high schools - but no worse, either. In terms of pupil evaluation of the school, Markles Flats came out markedly ahead of the other two junior high schools.

There were other important outcomes of the first year that were not recorded in the evaluation studies. Markles Flats generated a very effective parents' organization, dedicated to the continuation of the school programs. Markles Flats was also an extraordinary learning experience for the professional teachers, the teaching assistants, and for members of the Human Affairs Program, and of the Committee on Innovative Education of the Department of Education, who worked closely with the school. After a year of testing educational philosophies and theories against practical experience, we were all far better equipped than a year earlier to develop an innovative and effective junior high school.

The existence of Markles Flats, and the public controversy surrounding it, also served to generate increasing interest among Cornell professors in working with the schools. Whereas, during the first year, contacts between Markles staff and Cornell professors were relatively unplanned and unorganized, as we face the second year we find five members of the Committee on Innovative Education of the Department of Education, and seven professors from other departments and colleges offering to work closely with Markles Flats.

Planning for the Second Year

The beginning of planning activities for the second year was seriously delayed until continuance of the Human Affairs Program at Cornell University was assured. Through its first two years on the campus, HAP had been financed very largely by grants from the Ford Foundation and the New World Foundation. We assumed that HAP would be in a position to apply for further outside funds only if we were now able to demonstrate a substantial Cornell commitment to the support of the program. Although this effort to generate support within Cornell was undertaken at the time of very serious budget cuts throughout the university, the Human Affairs Program was indeed able to secure commitments from the various colleges making up Cornell and from contingency funds of the central administration so as to provide $50,000 of internal support, which HAP was able to expand with a $25,000 grant from the New World Foundation and with a $31,000 grant from the Title I of the Office of Education, for one particular HAP project. The internal Cornell commitments were not fully secured until the end of April, so it was not until May 1 that the Provost was able to announce that HAP would continue for another year.

In mid-May Superintendent Roger Bardwell called together the first of a series of planning meetings with representatives of his central administration, of the Human Affairs Program, of the Committee on Innovative Education, and of representatives of the parents. Two members of the School Board sat in on several of these meetings, and representatives of the Markles Flats

teachers and teaching assistants also participated from time to time.

While a number of issues required resolution before the Superintendent could recommend continuation of the school, we will focus here upon what seemed to be the crucial question. There was general agreement among all parties that "strong leadership" was needed for the second year, but there were serious differences of opinion as to how this leadership was to be provided.

Superintendent Bardwell felt that, to have the kind of program that he could publicly support before certain critical School Board members and community critics, the school must be headed by a "proven school administrator." After a number of exploratory meetings, the Superintendent recommended for this role the principal of an elementary school, who had spent some time during the spring in observation of Markles Flats and had expressed interest in the program. Since the nominee was a man of considerable experience in the district, with a salary at the high end of the principal's range, Dr. Bardwell argued that it would not be possible to support such an appointment within the budgetary constraints of the school district unless Cornell paid half of the salary. In effect, he proposed the appointment of a Principal-Cornell Coordinator.

The HAP position was that a coordinator was necessary to assist the teaching assistants and that the difficulties with the two roles in the past could be avoided if there were a general understanding that the principal had full administrative authority and that he would participate in the selection of the Cornell coordinator, so as to assure that the two men could work effectively together. While accepting the Superintendent's nomination of the principal, HAP declined to make this a joint appointment, and proposed to continue the school with a full-time Cornell coordinator.

The School Board's final decision was to have been made on a June 28 public meeting, but, when the Superintendent and the Human Affairs Program had been unable to agree on the plan up to this point, the parents persuaded a majority of the Board to allow three additional weeks to reopen the question of school leadership, and to resolve the other outstanding issues.

This agreement made possible an open search for a new principal, both within and outside the system - although the time limit seemed impossibly short. The parents' organization took the initiative in the search and brought forth a list of two strong internal candidates and three outsiders whose credentials seemed to hold substantial promise. We were encouraged to find at this late hour that, in spite of all the controversy, what Markles Flats had come to mean in the community and outside of it was attractive enough to bring forward such serious and highly qualified candidates. All of the candidates were interviewed by a group of parents, by representatives of HAP and of the Committee on Innovative Education, and by the Superintendent and his staff. We were fortunate to find that one man stood out in all of our evaluations: Jonathan Daitch, a doctoral candidate in education at the University of Massachusetts, who had just completed a year directing a program of undergraduate students working within the Marks Meadow public school of Amherst. Since Daitch had had exceptional experience in the kind of coordination role that appeared o be called for in terms of Cornell's interests, when Roger Bardwell proposed a joint appointment, the Human Affairs Program agreed to pay half of the salary for the Principal--Cornell Coordinator.

On July 21st, at the end of a heated argument before a large public meeting, the School Board voted to support Markles Flats for a second year under the new plan.

The New Markles Flats

The school opened on September 8th with 83 pupils. The Principal-Cornell Coordinator is working with an experienced professional staff of four teachers, two selected from the first year's professional staff, and the other two from among the most talented and dedicated TAs of 1970-71. For the first semester, the school will have 11 undergraduate TAs, 2 M.A.T. candidates, and 2 Ph.D. candidates (one in mathematics, the other in the sciences).

While the 1970 training program involved endless hours of discussions and debate on educational philosophy, this year, from the beginning, the staff was able to focus on the concrete problems of organization and curriculum. There is agreement that this year Markles Flats will be more "structured."

In organization, this means that the leadership question has been resolved. While the Principal-Coordinator has involved staff meetings in discussion and decision-making, Jonathan Daitch has been fully accepted by both professional teachers and TAs as the man with the final responsibility. TAs are now organized into project teams, with a professional teacher leading each team.

In curriculum, the pupils have many options but always within a general structure provided by the staff. After a half-hour general school meeting, the day is divided into three, one-hour course periods, and an hour and a half all-school period. For five week periods, the pupils select three areas of study from the offerings in communication arts, people studies, mathematics, science, crafts workmanship, and physical education. In each of these fields, several different projects are offered for each of the three morning hours, so that pupils have a choice, not only among fields, but also from options within each field of study.

All classes meet daily except Wednesday, which has been set aside for a weekly all-school meeting and field trips and special events for that whole school. The afternoon period of 1 to 2:30 is to be devoted to five-week all-school projects, in which groups of pupils and staff will work on interrelated aspects of the same general problem. For example, the staff is beginning with an ecology project, focusing on the problems of the Ithaca area.

So as to provide further learning experiences and also to conserve funds to be spent on teaching personnel, staff and pupils together are assuming responsibility for the housekeeping and record-keeping tasks.

The staff intends to involve the pupils in the governance of the school, but the form of this participation is not to be specified in advance. It is evolving out of all-school meetings of pupils and staff.

Each staff member will have a personal advisory relationship with five or six pupils. Staff members plan to consult frequently with parents regarding the academic and social progress of their advisees.

The Committee on Innovative Education has assumed responsibility for the seminar on junior high school education, which is to be required of each potential TA before he teaches at Markles Flats. Daitch, in collaboration with Psychology Professor Ulric Neisser, will teach the seminar for current TAs, focussed on the Markles Flats program. Neisser will also work with Daitch in relating the school more effectively to the Cornell resources of professors and facilities.

A PLAN FOR AN ALTERNATIVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

There are two basic motivations for an alternative school -- to develop a markedly different educational environment for a small group of students, and to institute a continuing commitment from Cornell to the community.

The environment will incorporate much attention to the needs of each individual and encourage responsible self-direction. The school will serve a variety of students who could benefit from an alternative approach to education. Many of these are not succeeding under the present system, even when provided with compensatory programs. In addition, there are other, more successful, students who might also benefit from a different approach. Of course, we realize that not all students or parents will be interested in this kind of experimental program, and we propose it as a possible option for those who wish it.

The other motivation behind the proposal is our recognition that the two higher educational institutions in Ithaca could contribute more than they presently do, in terms of skills and resources, to the surrounding community. This is a premise behind the formation of the Human Affairs Program at Cornell. As pertains to the proposed school, a number of faculty members and students are willing to commit much time and effort to the undertaking. As well as the skills and interests they bring to the project, they will make possible the high teacher-student ratio necessary in such a school. Of course, as well as benefiting the students and the community in general, this should be a valuable experience for the participating college students and faculty members.

Discussions on the alternative junior high school have been held throughout the spring, centered primarily in a seminar sponsored by the Cornell Human Affairs Program and the Department of Education. This seminar has involved not only Cornell students and faculty, but also experienced teachers from the Ithaca public schools, Ithaca College faculty, and some interested parents. A task force now at work will continue its efforts throughout the summer in order to prepare a viable program for the beginning of the school year.

Educational Philosophy

Every child is an individual with individual needs, interests, and aspirations. As such, he should be free to learn what he needs and wants to learn, from basic skills to more specialized, personal pursuits. However, the individual's ability and desire to engage in self-motivated endeavors is in large part determined by the degree to which his environment fosters and tolerates an investigative and critical state of mind. We seek, therefore, to create a school whose educational environment is designed to foster self-motivation, self-reliance, responsible self-discipline, and individual creativity -- a school dedicated to the principle that the purpose of education is to help each person become what he is in full measure. This goal is best achieved when the subject matter conforms to the student, not the student to the subject matter. For no single, prescribed body of knowledge can possibly fulfill the educational needs of so various a community of individuals.

Recognizing, however, that the individual is in fact a member of the community, it is not enough to seek to develop an awareness of self alone. Instead, the individual must also acquire an understanding of himself as a social being. We propose, therefore, to create a school designed not only to aid in the development of the individual, but in the development of the individual in relation to his fellow human beings -- a school whose classroom is the community and the world.

Educational Objectives

We feel the alternative junior high school will serve:

A. The Students, by

1. Allowing each student to progress according to his own needs and capacities.
2. Encouraging independent problem solving.
3. Encouraging each student to take more responsibility for his own education.
4. Enabling each student to pursue his own interests in greater depth.

5. Facilitating closer interaction between
   a. Fellow students of different ages.
   b. Students and a large number of staff members.
   c. Students and parents.
   d. Students and interested adults in the community.

B. The Community, by

1. Allowing for close involvement of parents in the school.
2. Allowing for active participation by interested community members in the educational enterprise.
3. Increasing general student contact with the community, so as to foster in the students a greater sense of responsibility for their roles as members of the community.

C. The Ithaca City School District, by

1. Providing a follow-up to innovative elementary school programs.
2. Appealing to students presently not reached by existing programs.
3. Preparing students for the high school's Model School plan.
4. Offering continuity of programs stressing autonomous learning.

D. Cornell University, by

1. Offering a viable community service project.
2. Providing an alternative accredited teacher-training experience.
3. Offering an alternative educational experience for the college students.
4. Providing a unique environment for educational research and curriculum projects.

School Structure

A. Students

We envision a volunteer enrollment of approximately 80 students, to be identified before the end of this school year. Every attempt will be made to attain a heterogeneous population. This group will be equally divided

between seventh and eighth graders and between boys and girls. We foresee the school being expanded to include ninth graders the following year.

B. Staff

There will be a high teacher-student ratio, with a minimum objective of one full-time staff member per four students. This is necessary to provide for the great degree of individual guidance demanded by this type of student-centered program. Assuming a student body of 80, we suggest that the school district provide the equivalent of at least three full-time teachers. At least two of these staff members will be professional teachers from different departments in the Ithaca secondary schools. The additional position may be filled by paid paraprofessionals, in accordance with the district ratio. The remainder of the staff will consist of about 15 full-time volunteer teachers drawn primarily from Cornell University. The teaching staff will function as a team, with one of the professional teachers serving as head teacher.

In addition to the full-time teaching staff, parents and other interested community members are expected to participate in planning and directing various school activities. Qualified community members will also be asked to provide specialized instruction, occupational guidance, and other counseling services. Also, services of a nurse, school psychologist, and other specialists will be provided by the school system on a basis proportionate to other district schools.

C. The Relationship Between Staff and Student

Because every child, like every adult, is a unique human being with thoughts and sensitivities of his own, it is expected that staff and students will strive to relate to each other on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. In this context, both teacher and student will serve each other as resources in a process of educational and personal growth. The teacher's primary role is the facilitation of learning, not the didactic teaching of subject matter. He is not to be viewed as an ultimate authority whose knowledge and interests limit the range of the student's learning experience.

The child will be able to draw on the ideas and knowledge of all members of the staff, as well as his fellow students. Furthermore, since the school cannot possibly contain within itself the full range of resources and materials that this atmosphere of free inquiry will necessitate, the community is to be considered as equally valid a resource as those available within the four walls of the school itself (see sections B, D, F).

Clearly, this atmosphere of "mutual respect and understanding" upon which the program is to be founded will not evolve overnight. It is essential, therefore, that the staff and students of the school work together throughout the summer on further developing this proposed alternative (through, for example, regular workshops addressing themselves to such tasks as discovering available resources within the Ithaca community). In this way, all concerned will begin to move toward achieving the difficult goal of developing real communication between the various members of the school community. Furthermore, in order to continue this process throughout the school year, it has been suggested that students be assigned to small regular groups, thus giving a reference group and at least one teacher with whom to identify. Similarly, the staff will continue to meet together regularly during the year for the express purpose of fostering such interpersonal interaction. Finally, all-school meetings, involving the entire community in the running of the school, will also be a part of this continuing process of open interaction.

D. Curriculum

The curriculum will attend to the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of both students and staff. In recognition of the diverse range of the students' individual abilities, there will be no grade divisions within the school. Instead, in keeping with the concept of self-discovery, each individual student will design and carry out his own activities insofar as he is capable. However, this flexibility of subject matter will not displace such basic skills as language arts and mathematics in the life of the student. Instead, such skills are seen as being fundamental to the daily life of each individual. These individually planned learning programs will be facilitated by the high adult-student ratio and the availability of personnel and materials from the community and colleges. Experiences in the

field will be a major part of each student's program. Students will also have the opportunity to avail themselves of special programs in the other junior high schools, such as language training, learning centers, athletics, music training, etc.

Of course, we recognize that students entering such an environment at the junior high school level may need guidance in developing the ability to plan independently and be responsible for their own interests. This assistance will at first take the form of a more structured program. And, as has already been pointed out, the work of structuring the program will take place largely over the summer through the combined efforts of both staff and students. For example, the staff will dedicate much time to specifying exactly what contributions they can make individually to the planned project or problem centered curriculum. Similarly, students will be encouraged during the year to make study choices in special interest areas, in keeping with individually planned learning programs which will have as their goal the promotion of self-motivation and self-reliance.

E. Evaluation

Continuous efforts will be made to assess the individual student's growth and to insure that he is prepared for subsequent education. Each student will keep a folder of his work, his thoughts, and his opinions of his own performance; similarly, each teacher will be responsible for a written narrative evaluation of the students' work for use by both students and parents. In addition, periodic meetings will be held between involved staff members and their students to discuss and evaluate each other's past work and future plans. Additional meetings between students and outside counselors and teachers will take place when appropriate. Conferences between students, their teachers, and their parents will also be an integral part of the evaluation program. It is especially important that parents not view these meetings as a substitute for the report card. Instead, they will occur as often as is desired and conveniently possible, and will concern themselves with any and every aspect of the school, the student's life there, and, when necessary, the student's life beyond the school as well. Finally, the emphasis in the evaluation of the student will be not only on what he knows but on what he can do.

However, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that student evaluation is but a part of a more general program of evaluation which will be an integral part of the functioning of the school. Students will be encouraged to evaluate their teachers; parents will be urged to evaluate the school; and the school will also invite a continuing appraisal of its programs by the Board of Education and the Ithaca City School District.

F. Building and Facilities

We see a necessity for the school to be located in a building separate from the present junior high schools. The Educational Services Center building, across the street from Boynton Junior High School, has been tentatively suggested. The building will serve as a general meeting place, house instructional and raw materials, and function as a "learning center" for the student body. Learning resources (including multi-media materials) will be provided on the same proportional basis as in the other schools. However, there will be an emphasis upon utilizing outside materials and resources, since we regard the entire community as our classroom.

The School and the Public School System

There is a need for established channels of communication between the alternative school and the other secondary schools in the district in order to promote an awareness of each other's programs. This interaction will facilitate the interchange of services among all three junior high schools, and will also enable the staff of the new school to prepare for continuity between its program and that of the high school. Finally, such a relationship will be helpful in fostering innovation in the public school system. In order to meet these ends, representatives of each of the established secondary schools will be invited to meet periodically during the school year with representatives from the alternative junior high school and the Cornell faculty coordinator.

APPENDICES TO

A PLAN FOR AN ALTERNATIVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

- Goals for the Student

- Evaluation

- The Student Body

- Selection of Teaching Assistants

GOALS FOR THE STUDENT

It is important in this rapidly changing world that school emphasize learning how to learn. In keeping with this philosophy, the goals for the students in the AJHS are purposely general and weighted toward the learning of processes rather than subjects. There will be content, nevertheless, for subject matter is the vehicle through which these processes are learned. Instead of predetermined curriculum units, however, areas of study will be developed by the staff and students. We desire to consider the development of the child as a whole; consequently "intellectual development" to us constitutes more than merely cognitive growth.

I. To develop an awareness of himself in relation to his intellectual development:

A. To demonstrate intellectual abilities and skills
   1. To demonstrate skills in the communication arts
      a. reading ability
      b. verbal expression
      c. written expression
      d. expression through other media, e.g. painting, film making

   2. To demonstrate skills of inquiry
      a. to develop mathematical competencies
      b. to define and select areas of interest
      c. to successfully complete tasks within these areas
      d. to devise his own strategies for solving problems
      e. to develop critical thinking ability
      f. to experiment with and try new approaches to reach a desired goal
      g. to apply acquired skills to the solving of new problems
      h. to discover new ways to apply acquired skills
      i. to question given premises and their validity

B. To develop a feeling of self-worth and a realistic understanding of himself
   1. To develop self-awareness

   2. To develop self-confidence by attempting tasks beyond immediate ability, but not beyond possible reach

   3. To develop self-direction and self-motivation by
      a. setting his own tasks
      b. seeking help
      c. working autonomously

   4. To develop self-discipline by making commitments and following through on them

   5. To demonstrate self-reliance by independently selecting and rejecting experiences

   6. To develop a tolerance for ambiguity, change, and differences

   7. To develop individual creativity

   8. To develop the ability to creatively deal with stress-producing situations

C. To participate actively in his own physical development

1. To understand bodily functions and health

2. To participate actively in physical activities designed to enhance his physical health

D. To develop a lasting interest in learning

II. To develop an awareness of himself in relation to his environment

A. Social environment

1. To develop social sensitivity and understanding

2. To develop an ability to empathize

3. To listen and utilize the ideas of others

4. To work with and aid others in social and task oriented situations

5. To develop an awareness and understanding of different cultures and life styles

6. To value those relationships which enable him to achieve the above kinds of objectives

B. Physical environment

1. To understand the relationship between man and his environment

2. To acquire modes of more deeply appreciating the world around him

EVALUATION

Any educational innovation if it is truly experimental, must be concerned with outcomes. In order to insure that meaningful progress is occuring as a result of the Alternative Junior High School (AJHS), evaluation is necessary. This is important for the good of the students and teachers in the school but also because of the value of disseminating the findings to interested educators and the general public.

Evaluation should be consistent with the aspirations and activities of the school. Therefore, in the statement headed "Goals for the Student" an attempt has been made to elaborate the educational goals of the school. The evaluation of the school and its programs will focus upon the congruence between our objectives and the actual outcomes.

Because of the many objectives stressed in the AJHS, affective as well as cognitive, we envision its evaluation taking many forms. Some of these will be informal and impressionistic. Others will be highly formal. Whatever the case, all evaluations will be systematically employed.

Because of the nature and diversity of objectives stressed in the AJHS there is a great need for the bulk of the ongoing evaluation to be informal and continuous. However, where formal evaluative instruments are available and appropriate to the needs of the school they will be used. The search will continue for pertinent standardized tests.

The formal evaluation of the school will involve standardized tests and use a pre and post test experimental design. These tests will be administered by outside experts having no connection with the operation of the AJHS. The performance of the students on a number of important criteria will be measured very early in the fall semester. A knowledge of these antecedents will allow for an assessment of student growth in an accurate manner. Summative evaluations will take place at the end of each school year. This will enable a longiudinal analysis of the performance of students on these variables.

Generally this experimental design will take a relative comparison format. That is, the growth of the students in the AJHS will be compared with that of equivalent samples of students from the other junior high schools which will act as control groups. The factors upon which these comparisons are made will be more inclusive than simply knowledge of specific facts or even more complex cognitive abilities. In addition to measuring intellectual development the social-emotional growth of students in the experimental and control groups will be measured.

In the area of intellectual development a wide range of standardized tests are available to measure academic achievement. One which is especially relevant to this type of comparative longitudinal study is the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills published by Houghton Mifflin Company. This battery of tests measures performance in vocabulary, reading comprehension, language skills, work-study skills and arithmetic skills. There are two reasons why the Iowa tests are appropriate to our evaluation plans. First this is a battery of tests concerned with generalized intellectual skills. Since the AJHS philosophy is oriented toward the development of a variety of conceptual skills it is desirable to use measures of these rather than of factual information. Also the Iowa tests have a separate battery for each grade through the eighth (the ninth grade takes the eighth grade test). This format is appropriate to our purposes since we plan an annual pre and post test evaluation.

After considering a number of tests of psychological development, the Self-image Questionnaire* has been selected. This assesses the feelings and behavior of teenagers in areas such as: impulse control, social relations, external mastery, and emotional tone. It should be helpful in assessing social as well as emotional development.

As well as self-assessment, ratings by others is a valuable way of indicating psychological growth. A good instrument in this regard is the Behavior Rating Form**.

This is completed by teachers and is a very helpful way of obtaining before and after comparisons on variables such as: reactions to failure, self-confidence in new situations, sociability with peers, and the need for encouragement and reassurance. It will supplement other more open-ended teacher assessments of student development.

These tests will comprise a battery which will enable a systematic formal evaluation of the growth of students in the AJHS.

* Daniel Offer, The Psychological World of the Teen-ager (New York, Basic Books, 1969), 286 pp.

** Stanley Coopersmith, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem (W.H. Freeman & Co., 1967) 283 pp

Less formalized evaluation will be made in light of the stated objectives of the school. In addition to complementing the formalized summative evaluations at the end of the year, these procedures will be used as a means of evaluating the ongoing program so that decisions on changes may be made without waiting for the results of the summative evaluations.

The need for sequential evaluation is especially apparent in light of the project nature of the school's curriculum. Group projects and individual studies in various curricular areas will be continuously in flux. In order to assess progress and improve these offerings, evaluation will be a continuing effort. In this we will strive to be aware of unexpected gains and unwanted side effects as well as specified objectives.

The ongoing evaluations will take the following forms:

1. Student evaluation of the program
2. Student evaluation of personal progress

Each student will keep a folder of his work, his thoughts, and his opinions. This folder will become a focal point in helping to assess the student's progress.

3. Teacher evaluation of the program
4. Teacher evaluation of individual students

Staff meetings will take place at regular intervals (as often as twice per week during the early phases of the program). At these meetings systematic attempts will be made to evaluate the overall success of programs and projects and the progress of individual students in them. Desirable outcomes will be indicated in advance and progress toward these will be marked at predetermined points.

5. Parent evaluation of the program
6. Parent evaluation of his child's progress

Every attempt will be made to get parents involved in the school's programs from the very start.

Individual written evaluations will compose a large share of the evaluation procedure. This is essential if any long-term changes are to be assessed. However, other forms, in particular the conference, will also be used. In this case a written report of the subject and decisions made at the conference will also be kept on file. Some of the various forms of conferences which will be encouraged to take place are:

1. Student conferences: Students will be offered time to meet alone to evaluate programs.

2. Teacher conferences: It has been indicated that a liaison committee will be established to improve channels of communication between the AJHS and the other public shools. Its membership will include secondary school teachers and some AJHS staff. In addition to its liaison function, the committee will also function as a team of informal evaluators. This interaction with other interested teachers will serve as a valuable reference point for the AJHS staff members.

   Teacher conference time will also be spent assessing the teaching competency of the teaching assistants.

3. Parent conferences: Parents will be encouraged to meet separately as well as with school personnel.

4. Student-teacher conferences

5. Parent-teacher conferences

6. Parent-student discussions: Parents will be encouraged to meet with other children as well as their own. It is hoped that this type of meeting will provide the parent with a feel for various children in the community. It should also provide another adult model for the child in addition to his teachers and his parents.

7. Parent-teacher-student conferences

The Head Teacher and the Cornell Faculty Coordinator will share the responsibility for (1) checking to see which of the above types of evaluations are used most frequently, (2) attempting to find improvements for them and (3) encourageng different forms of evaluation to be tried.

Evaluation is also necessary in order to find out the extent to which the student in the AJHS is equipped for his future.

Part of our research design will be a long-term attempt to measure this. Follow-up studies will include both formal and informal evaluation procedures.

Because program development is still in its early stages, modifications in the research design may be anticipated as better modes of evaluation come to light. This statement, however, must not be misunderstood. We recognize the need for a comprehensive and systemative evaluation of the proposed AJHS and we intend to provide the type of evaluation which at its very minimum would match the program as we have presently outlined it.

THE STUDENT BODY

There are two steps to deciding who the eighty students will be. First is getting applications; second is selecting the final list from those who have applied.

Applications will be solicited from parents after a series of public neighborhood meetings designed to inform people about the program and enable them to ask questions. It is likely that parents of many students who would benefit from the alternative junior high school will not attend such meetings. We will try to reach such parents through consultation with elementary and junior high school personnel. We assume that the students involved will be included in informative sessions and in any decision to apply.

The final selection of students will be carried on to insure as heterogeneous a student body as possible. A wide distribution of students of diverse ability levels, different ages, both sexes, all races, and various socio-economic levels is the goal. Where selection cannot be made on the basis of that goal because of similarity of students, it will be made randomly. In this selection, elementary and secondary school personnel familiar with the background and needs of the students will be consulted.

SELECTION OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS FOR AJHS

Cornell students who apply for full-time teaching assistant positions will be screened by the three professional teachers and the Cornell faculty coordinator. For the first year, criteria for selection will be 1) sincere interest in junior high school students, 2) participation in the formulation of the school, 3) willingness to make a substantial commitment of time and effort, 4) competency in academic areas applicable to a junior high school student. We will aim for 12-15 full-time teaching assistants with diverse academic majors and extra-curricular interests. A summer session with professional teachers will firmly establish the specific functions of the teaching assistants in academic areas.